

20P

REMARKS OF CARMEN L. LOPEZ
IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED BILL NO. 5724
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2013
10:00 AM IN ROOM 2B OF THE LOB

CHAIRMAN ROJAS, CHAIRMAN CASANO,
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

MY NAME IS CARMEN L. LOPEZ.

I AM A RESIDENT AND TAXPAYER OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT, AND AM HERE TO SPEAK IN FAVOR OF PROPOSED BILL #5724, AN ACT PROHIBITING MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES FROM SERVING ON CERTAIN MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES.

I COMMEND REP. JACK HENNESSY FOR HAVING THE MORAL COURAGE TO INTRODUCE THIS BILL IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION FROM BRIDGEPORT'S ENTRENCHED POLITICAL MACHINE. I HOPE THAT REPRESENTATIVE AUDEN GROGGINS, MY REPRESENTATIVE, AND A MEMBER OF THIS COMMITTEE WILL ALSO SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION SO THAT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE OF BRIDGEPORT, AS EXPRESSED IN OUR CITY CHARTER, WILL ONCE AGAIN BE THE RULE OF LAW IN THE PARK CITY.

THE BRIDGEPORT CITY CHARTER EMBODIES A SOUND PUBLIC POLICY. IT PROHIBITS PERSONS EMPLOYED BY THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT FROM SERVING AS MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF A STATE STATUTE, SIX (6) OF THE TWENTY (20) MEMBERS OF OUR CITY COUNCIL ARE ALSO CITY EMPLOYEES.

AND THAT NUMBER DOESN'T ACCOUNT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE CLOSE RELATIVES WORKING FOR THE CITY OR FOR THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION.

I WISH TO POINT OUT, THAT THIS LEGISLATION, IF PASSED, WILL HAVE NO IMPACT UPON TOWNS AND CITIES WHICH HAVE A BOARD OF FINANCE, A BODY WITH DEFINED BUDGETARY AND FISCAL AUTHORITY, WHICH SETS THE MUNICIPAL MILL RATE.

MOST OF YOUR TOWNS MAY NOT NEED THIS BILL, BUT IN BRIDGEPORT, A ONE PARTY CITY WITH NO GUARANTEE OF MINORITY REPRESENTATION ON ITS LEGISLATIVE BODY AND WITH NO BOARD OF FINANCE OR BOARD OF APPORTIONMENT AND TAXATION, WE NEED THIS BILL DESPERATELY.

WE NEED YOUR HELP IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE A CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS CONFLICT OF INTEREST, WHICH OUR CITY CHARTER ATTEMPTED TO PREVENT. NO PERSON CAN BE EXPECTED TO SERVE TWO MASTERS, AND DIVIDED LOYALTIES ARE NOT CONDUCTIVE TO RESPONSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT.

SOME HAVE DEFENDED THE STATUS QUO BY SAYING "LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE." WHILE THIS HAS SOME SUPERFICIAL APPEAL IT CANNOT WITHSTAND LEGAL, POLITICAL OR MORAL SCRUTINY.

THE PEOPLE OF BRIDGEPORT HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN, IN THE FORM OF A CHARTER PROVISION, WHICH IS PART OF OUR ORGANIC LAW. THOSE WHO TEMPORARILY HOLD OFFICE, SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO THWART THE RULE OF THE PEOPLE BASED UPON AN EXISTING STATE STATUTE.

HERE IN CONNECTICUT WE BELIEVE IN THE PRINCIPLE OF HOME RULE. WE EVEN HAVE A PROVISION OF OUR STATE CONSTITUTION DEDICATED TO THAT PROPOSITION.

BY PASSING THIS BILL, YOU WILL FREE THE PEOPLE OF BRIDGEPORT FROM THE SHACKLES OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST, BROUGHT ABOUT BY ONE PARTY MACHINE RULE. BRIDGEPORT IS A CITY IN WHICH THE "LOYAL OPPOSITION" IS USUALLY NON-EXISTENT. WHEN IT DOES SURFACE, IT SERVES AS A WHOLLY OWNED MACHINE SUBSIDIARY.

PLEASE ALLOW THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE OF BRIDGEPORT, AS EXPRESSED IN OUR CITY CHARTER, TO GOVERN BRIDGEPORT ONCE AGAIN.

THANK YOU AND I WILL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.